


ADAMS, JEFF  
(LINCOLN & BUCKHAWK)

DRAWER 21a

Sculptors-A

71. 2009. 085 02739



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# Statues of Abraham Lincoln

Jeff Adams

Excerpts from newspapers and other  
sources

From the files of the  
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection



Dear Friends: I found your museum and thought you might find interest in a project happening here in the mid-west. A small committee of nine community volunteers are constructing a thirteen foot bronze sculpture of Lincoln and Blackhawk. The sculpture is being placed in Mix Park on Route 2 in Oregon, Illinois. When placed on it's foundation, it will stand seventeen feet tall. A local artist named Jeff Adams from Grand DeTour is building the piece.

Lincoln is said to have spoke in Oregon, Illinois during his travels. He was also a member of the infantry when they battled Chief Blackhawk just up the river in Stillman's run. The sculpture highlights comparisons between the two leaders. It's something to see! Funds for the project are being raised by developing 50 limited edition smaller versions of the sculpture. To date, 37 of the 50 have been sold. We are far enough along that construction on the 17 footer will start by the end of January and take over a year for the artist. A student has designed a web site for the project. The site is found at : <http://207.142.144.85/wear/std40/home.htm> Please see the site or contact me if you have interest in the project.

I welcome your feedback....



# Sculpting Lincoln

## Paths of Conviction, Footsteps of Fate

Bronze Statue By Jeff Adams

Dedicated On October 13, 2002

Located In Mix Park, Oregon, Illinois

GPS Coordinates: N 42° 00370' W 89 19.972'

Story and photos by Carl Volkmann

In May of 1832, Sauk and Fox Indians left the Iowa territory and returned to their homes across the Mississippi River in northern Illinois. Led by Black Hawk, the Indians wanted to reclaim the land that they had lost in a disputed treaty signed in St. Louis in 1804. Their return to northern Illinois caused widespread panic among the white settlers, and Governor Reynolds quickly called up the militia. The Black Hawk Indian War began just north of Oregon, Illinois. The lives of Black Hawk and Abraham Lincoln were eternally linked and intertwined during the war. Lincoln volunteered to serve in the war, and his company elected him captain. Although Lincoln never saw any real combat, he was proud of his service and valued his first experience in leading and handling men.

In 1911, famed sculptor Lorado Taft helped dedicate a 48-foot statue, which he called "The Eternal Indian." A composite of Sauk, Fox, Sioux, and Mohawk likenesses, the statue now is referred to as "Black Hawk." The statue stands 125 above the Rock River, a silent guardian of the land that once gave shelter and sustenance to Black Hawk's people.

In 2002 Abraham Lincoln and Black Hawk were symbolically linked and intertwined once again as sculptor, Jeff Adams, completed a unique Lincoln/Black Hawk sculpture which he called *Paths of Conviction, Footsteps of Fate*. Located in Oregon's Mix Park, the statue was dedicated on October 13, 2002. In the 2000 edition of the *Oregon Area Community Guide*, Adams stated, "The inspiration for this sculpture began with my own path of conviction

as a sculptor. That path began in the small town of Oregon, Illinois, a town with a sculptural heritage dating to the early 1900s when Lorado Taft and the Eagle's Nest Art Colony flourished there. One may wonder at the incorporation of Lincoln and Black Hawk in one sculpture, as they were on opposite sides during the Black Hawk War of 1832. However, these two figures pay tribute to two cultures and to two of the most important figures from this area's history. The gestures of Black Hawk and Lincoln in this sculpture symbolize the relationship of their lives and struggles to this common land."

Adams has been sculpting since 1976 and has reproduced and finished over 600 sculptures. He received a B.S. degree in Civil Engineering from Northern Arizona University in 1982. His large sculptures are found in Mt. Morris, Wheaton, Oregon, and Naperville, Illinois, and Davenport, Iowa. The recipient of numerous artistic awards from communities in Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, Ohio, and Michigan, Adams currently owns *inBronze*, a studio/gallery/foundry in Mt. Morris, Illinois.

On the plaque next to the Lincoln/Black Hawk statue, Adams shares this observation: "The sculpture is a reflection on the personal conviction, struggle, and fate shared by Lincoln and Black Hawk. No other relationship is intended. Black Hawk is depicted as faithfully as could be determined from the very few existing paintings, while Lincoln is a composite of all 64 documented photographs. Life masks were used as references for both figures. Black Hawk sits on an incline, symbolic of the precarious position of the Native American during the white settlement of the prairie. It has been documented that Black Hawk said he gave everything



he had away in mourning the loss of his two children. The only covering he retained was a piece of buffalo robe. That statement provided the visual image of Black Hawk clutching the buffalo robe lifted in both defiance and pleading. His left arm clings to the rock symbolizing his effort to retain the Sauk homeland. In this sculpture, Lincoln emerges from the same rock, reaching forward on his own path of conviction, which ultimately led to the presidency. My intent was to capture Lincoln's spirit, not illustrate a particular moment in history. I believe sculpture contributes to the identity of a place and its people. My hope is the heritage of sculpture that began with Lorado Taft will not just be something from our past. This sculpture aspires to become part of that history, linking our artistic heritage with a continuing tradition of art and sculpture."

### For further reading:

Call, Keith. *Images of America: Oregon, Illinois*. Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2005.

*Oregon Area Communities Visitors' Guide*, 2000.

Williams, Lee. "Black Hawk & Lincoln Interpretive, Historical." *Rockford Register Star*, October 14, 2002.





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